

Social Studies Graduation Requirements

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1. What is the role of the State Board of Education in graduation requirements?

[RCW 28A.230.090](#) authorizes SBE to establish some of the state's graduation requirements. SBE has established essential credit requirements, a culminating project, and a high school and beyond plan ([WAC 180-51-061](#), [WAC 180-51-066](#), and WAC 180-51-067).

2. What is the 2012-2015 social studies graduation requirement?

WAC [180-51-066](#) requires 2.5 credits of social studies for graduation for students enrolled through the graduating class of 2015. This requirement includes 1 credit of US History and Government, 1 credit of Contemporary World History, Geography and Problems, and .5 credit of Washington State History and Government.

3. What is the 2016 and beyond social studies graduation requirement?

WAC 180-51-067 requires 3 credits of social studies for graduation for students enrolled in the graduating class of 2016 and beyond. This requirement includes 1 credit of US History, 1 credit of Contemporary World History, Geography and Problems, .5 credit of Civics, and .5 credit of social studies elective.

4. Why did the State Board of Education add a Civics graduation requirement for the graduating class of 2016?

The 2009 Legislature passed a law ([RCW 28A.230.093](#)) requiring the State Board of Education to add at least .5 credit in civics if SBE were to increase the number of course credits in social studies.

5. What is the required content of the Civics course required for the graduating class of 2016?

[RCW 28A.230.093](#) specifically requires that the content of the civics requirement must include, but not be limited to:

- a) Federal, state, and local government organization and procedures;
- b) Rights and responsibilities of citizens addressed in the Washington State and United States Constitutions;
- c) Current issues addressed at each level of government; and
- d) Electoral issues, including elections, ballot measures, initiatives, and referenda.

6. Where in the curriculum should the Civics course required for the graduating class of 2016 be taught?

Districts will determine where to place this high school level course. Districts are required to ensure that students are able to meet the Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) for each content area. While the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) provides a scope and sequence which recommends where courses may be administered, the actual placement of courses may vary from district to district as long as the district is able to ensure the standards are being met and the course placement does not fluctuate outside of the middle or high school grade band. For example, if OSPI recommends Contemporary World Problems at 12th grade, a district could choose to instead offer the course at the 11th grade.

OSPI's Social Studies office intends to update the recommended scope and sequencing of courses in 2012.

7. If my district currently offers a .5 credit Civics course which fulfills .5 credit of the Contemporary World Problems (CWP) requirement, does my district need to offer an additional .5 credit Civics course?

No. Districts are not required to offer an additional civics course as long as the existing civics course includes all of the requirements stated in [RCW 28A.230.093](#). However, districts need to ensure students are able to earn 3 credits in social studies.

Some districts that currently include Civics as a semester CWP course may choose to meet the civics requirement while at the same time meeting the CWP requirement. This approach would create flexibility for districts to teach some other one-credit course, such as 9th or 10th grade world history.

8. Do Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) change with the addition of a Civics course?

Many of the civics standards that apply to the new Civics course currently reside at the 11th grade in the existing “US History and Government” course. OSPI may elect to revise the social studies standards in 2012, but any changes would be fairly minor and simply would move specific existing standards to the more appropriate grade level given the revised sequence of courses.

9. Why did the State Board of Education change Washington State History and Government to a noncredit requirement for the graduating class of 2016?

Many schools/districts are teaching Washington State History and Government in 7th grade, to 7th grade standards and grade level expectations. Washington [law](#) does not permit districts to award credit for course work taken prior to 9th grade if the academic level of the course work does not exceed the requirements for 8th grade classes i.e., is not at a high school academic level. State Board of Education [rule](#) required students to earn .5 credits in Washington State History and Government. This policy conflict put districts in a bind because technically, many districts could not award credit due to the academic level of the class.

The new policy provides greater flexibility for districts and students. Districts can offer Washington State History and Government at a middle or high school level. If offered at a high school academic level, districts may still choose to award credit. If offered at a middle school academic level, students can still satisfy a graduation requirement. Satisfactory completion of the requirement must be noted on the students’ transcripts.

10. Do students have to pass Washington State History and Government or simply show evidence that they took the course?

Students must successfully complete a course in Washington State history and government. The successful completion of this course must be indicated on students’ transcripts.

11. Does Washington State History and Government need to be a semester course or can it be embedded within other content?

OSPI recommends a semester long course in Washington State History and Government at the 7th grade. The current OSPI [WAC 392-410-120](#) requires “a one-semester course -- i.e., 90 (50 minute) hours of instruction -- or its equivalent in Washington State history and government ... in grades seven through twelve combined, but not at each grade level.” Alternatively, [WAC 180-51-050](#) permits districts to establish formal policies/procedures for awarding competency-based credit in any subject.

12. Does my district need to offer Washington State History and Government at the high school level for those students that did not take the course in middle school?

Yes. If a student failed or did not take the course at the middle level, then a district must offer the course at the high school level. However, both the class of 2016 WAC (180-51-067) and class of 2012-2015 WAC ([180-51-066](#)) provide exceptions for students who have transferred from schools in another state after the completion of 10th grade or for those students that have already successfully completed a state history and government course in another state.

13. Why is World History not included in the social studies graduation requirements?

World History is not a specific graduation requirement. However, a district could choose to offer this course as the .5 district choice or social studies elective credit. Additionally, districts may also consider offering a *contemporary* world history course and count this towards the required Contemporary World Problems (CWP) credit.

14. Can a course in World History be counted as a Contemporary World Problems (CWP) credit?

A course in World History may be counted as a CWP credit if the course is taught as “contemporary world history”. Ancient world history, for example, would not meet the requirements of a CWP credit. Please refer to the [Washington State K-12 Social Studies Learning Standards](#) for more information.

15. What are acceptable equivalencies for the Contemporary World Problems (CWP) credit?

WAC 180-51-067 states, “One credit shall be required in contemporary world history, geography, and problems. Courses in economics, sociology, civics, political science, international relations, or related courses with emphasis on contemporary problems may be accepted as equivalencies.”

The “geography and “problems” course work should be contemporary geography and contemporary world problems.

The [Washington State K-12 Social Studies Learning Standards](#) address what students should know and be able to do when they complete the course at the 12th grade level. Districts should ensure that any courses intended to count as equivalencies for the CWP credit also meet the standards outlined at the 12th grade level.

16. Why was the title of US History and Government in WAC 180-51-066 changed to US History in WAC 180-51-067?

WAC 180-51-067 added a .5 credit, government-based civics requirement that addresses the study of government. While some principles and foundations of government will likely be addressed in teaching United States History, the formal “civics” course will house the bulk of the government content.

OSPI’s recommended scope and sequence and the Washington State K-12 Social Studies Learning Standards recommend that US history be taught at the 11th grade and primarily address history of the 20th and 21st centuries.

17. Students will be required to earn 3.0 credits in social studies. While 2.5 of those credits are prescribed in WAC 180-51-067, some districts currently offer Economics, AP World History, AP European History, and AP Human Geography. How are these courses accounted for in the class of 2016 graduation requirements?

Students will be required to earn 3.0 credits in social studies. While 2.5 of those credits are prescribed in WAC 180-51-067, an additional .5 credit (semester course) is considered "district choice." In short, a district could choose to offer any of the courses listed as the additional social studies course. Additionally, it may be possible for some of these courses to count towards the 1.0 CWP credit. Please reference the above CWP questions for more information.